

13 JAN 1976

# CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

Behind \$6 million in covert political aid

## Kissinger refuses to trust Italy's Communists

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Washington

"An error of judgment" by Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger is the way some liberals, many of them in the intelligence community, are describing covert U.S. aid to anti-communist parties in Italy.

These critics say it would be more useful if American leaders and diplomats started talking to Italian and perhaps other European Communists before they come to power.

The nub of the argument over the Italian subsidy — \$6 million to be used to back Christian Democrats and Socialists — is whether the Italian Communist Party can be trusted in its claims to be independent from Moscow and second and even more important, to be converted to democratic processes.

Kissinger critics insist that communism in Europe is in crisis, and that a new schism, successor to those made by Yugoslavia, Albania, and China, is in the making.

For Secretary Kissinger the Italian operation — news of which was leaked from congressional committees briefed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) — is all part of the "managing the outward thrust of the Soviet Union," which he sees as the real character of detente. He warned members of NATO council at their last meeting in Brussels, that they must beware of letting communists participate in their governments.

Of about 2 million communists in Western Europe at present, it is estimated that 1.7 million are in Italy. Led by Enrico Berlinguer the Communist Party there won a third of the vote in parliamentary elections last June. Party members now dominate regional and local government in three regions, Tuscany, Umbria, and Amilia Romana, so that 50 percent of all Italians live in communist-controlled areas.

As members of the second-largest party, Italy's Communists participate in parliamentary committees and thereby already play a quasi-governmental role by influencing an estimated 70 percent of legislation.

But the nagging question about the Italian Communists, as far as the U.S. is concerned, is the extent of the party's loyalty to the Soviet Union.

Before 1968, Italian Communists had sought to persuade the electorate that the liberal experiment in Czechoslovakia proved that the Soviet Union would tolerate a pluralist approach to socialism. But when the Russians marched into Prague, the Spanish, Belgian, and British parties were quick to express their dismay. Only the West German and French parties stuck with the Soviet Union.

The opposition the Russians now face by a meeting was dramatized last November between Mr. Berlinguer and the French Communist leader Georges Marchais. The two not only declared that they would seek governmental status only by democratic means but they endorsed freedom of speech, pluralist political systems, and "alternations" of ruling parties — meaning that if they ever got into the government they would step aside if the electorate voted them out.

In other statements the Italian party has gone further, in asserting that it wants Italy to stay in NATO and the European Economic Community.

Dr. Kissinger's reaction to all this is, in effect: "Beware. It may be all tactical. The Stalinists remain latent. If a West European communist government had to choose between a pro-Soviet and a pro-U.S. policy, they would probably choose the Soviet Union, not because their independence is a fraud but because they agreed with the Russians fundamentally. Their democratic professions are, furthermore, only skin deep. Just wait till they get their hands on power and you will see."

Some of Dr. Kissinger's advisers believe, also, that the rank and file of European communists are more wedded than their leaders to Soviet leadership, thereby setting up a powerful undercurrent for return to orthodoxy.

And they note that deeply imbedded in the psyche of all European communists is the fear of the Soviet Union and the memory of the time, in 1923 when the Third International was born, when the Spanish Communist Party tried an independent course and the Soviet Union managed to expel all the leading cadres except six, with whom they founded a new and independent party.